

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

<https://www.e-ir.info/2013/08/03/terrorism-realities-constructs-and-theatre/>

JAMES COLE, AUG 3 2013

How Big is the Threat of Contemporary Terrorism and Where Does It Come From?

"Terrorism is theatre"
(Jenkins, 1975, p. 16)

The fourth wave of terrorism is the leviathan of international security, and simultaneously the greatest performance of the 21st century. This wave of terrorism is a performance both in that (1), it has been responsible for unprecedented political spectacles, such as the destruction of the twin towers, and (2), on a metaphysical level it has provided actors a role to play, and has structured their relationships with others as well as with themselves. This paper takes an unconventional approach to the question by looking at how contemporary terrorism originates from the desire to construct identity, but, situates this within the context of the international system's dependence on macro-securitizations to structure the priorities, assumptions and expectations of international relations. Due to this, terrorism, in the context of the Global War on Terror [GWOt], is simply a temporalized and dialectical phenomenon (Schinkel, 2009, p. 188): it has been installed as the referent object in a pre-existing security framework that works by dividing "us" and "them".

This paper therefore, seeks to make the argument that to measure the threat from terrorism, it is important to assess terrorism as the sum of many elements. These include physical attacks, discourses spoken and visuals presented. More importantly however, this paper seeks to identify that the threat from terrorism largely comes from the need for a macro-securitization, which necessitate the construction of a relationship with an "other". To achieve this, this paper proceeds in three parts: firstly, with an outline of the "objective" reality of terrorism; secondly, an exploration of the necessity of an "other" in Western philosophy; finally, with a detailed assessment into the construction of terrorism as a threat, by looking at the process of macro-securitization. It will then be summarised that the threat from terrorism comes from the need to construct an "other", and that to measure the size, it is necessary to also recognise the process and elements used to securitize the threat.

The securitization of terrorism relies on more than simply the physical threat from terrorism. Nevertheless, without a physical threat, a securitizing actor's speech act would lack legitimacy. Thus, with a largely Western bias, this section seeks to recognise the threat from terrorism as a physical phenomenon. However, this section will also provide evidence for the argument that terrorism, especially in the West, is largely a constructed threat; as individuals 'are 6 times more likely to die from hot weather than from a terrorist attack' (Jones, 2013).

The recent Boston bombing is a useful example to identify the context in which the threat of contemporary terrorism is situated, and is indicative of those perceived to be responsible for its perpetration. Khaled Beydoun argues that the 'interim moments, between catastrophe and discovering the real culprits, define what it means to be Arab and Muslim-American today' (Beydoun, 2013). Simply put, Beydoun refers to the fact that: (1), despite a lack of evidence, there was a significant volume of responses questioning if AQ were responsible, and (2), recent investigations are now probing into what extent the AQ propagandist magazine *Inspire* influenced the bombers (Horwitz, 2013). This assumption is statistically the most obvious one to arrive at, due to the fact that Sunni extremists [of which AQ are a section] have: (1), ranked highest in terms of casualties inflicted through terrorism, (2), were responsible for 56% of terrorist attacks in 2011, and (3), have caused 70% of the fatalities from terrorism (U.S. Department of State, 2011).

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

However, it is equally important to recognise the context in which these claims are made, as the West constantly presents the idea that AQ wants to harm 'us'. As examples, the UK's security agency MI5 remarks that 'Al Qaeda represents the biggest threat to the UK' (MI5, 2013); the UK's Home Office has claimed that they 'know' groups like 'Al-Qaeda are determined to exploit our openness to attack us, and plot to kill as many of our citizens as possible' (UK Home Office, 2011). This perception is similarly echoed in US foreign policy which states that 'Al Qaeda may be plotting additional attacks against the United States at home or overseas' (NCTC, 2013, p. 4).

Despite AQ being portrayed as 'wanting to hurt the West', it is necessary to look at the actual victims of terrorist activities in order to further assess if the claims that AQ represents the biggest threat to the UK and US today, can in fact be founded. In terms of an objective assessment it seems they cannot not. The victims of terrorist activities can be narrowed down to specific countries; in some cases they can be narrowed down to single regions. For example, in 2011, around 10,00 terrorist attacks took place in the world. Yet over half of these were isolated to Afghanistan and Iraq, with Europe and the Western Hemisphere experiencing just over 1,000 (U.S. Department of State, 2011). An even more recent example to use is that of Pakistan. Within Pakistan, so far in 2013, there have been 2155 fatalities as a result of terrorist attacks. However, out of the eight regions of Pakistan, two are disproportionately affected. In terms of casualties, 955 were located in the FATA and 556 in the Sindh region; the Gilgit-Baltistan region only suffering 2, and the Azad Kashmir region experiencing none (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2013).

Moreover, non-Westerners are 38 times more likely to be killed by an AQ attack than Westerners (Musharbash, 2009). In fact, in the West, more people die from accidents than do people worldwide, from pre-meditated terrorist attacks (Rogers, 2011). In addition, whilst Sunni extremists may have inflicted 70% of fatalities from terrorist attacks, the Animal and Earth liberation fronts have conducted 2200% more terrorist attacks on American soil since 2001 (START, 2012, p. 26). However, these do not attract the same rhetoric as the GWOt. Finally, to return to the Boston bombings as an example, it must be remembered that this represents the first attack by internationally linked terrorists on American soil in 12 years. Therefore, America is evidently not perpetually plagued by terrorism.

Thus, what begins to emerge is a picture in which it is possible to identify (1) groups responsible for, (2) victims of, and (3) locations of terrorist attacks. However, the claims made by Western governments, such as the UK and US, do not necessarily correlate to the statistics showing that (1) mainly non-westerns are victims of terrorist activities, and (2), the majority of terrorist attacks occur outside of Western sovereign territory. Therefore, it is now the aim of this paper to explore the idea that, whilst the physical threat from terrorism is less in the West, it is simply a single essential element in the overall securitization and presentation of terrorism as 'the biggest threat to the UK'.

Having put forth the argument that terrorism is a threat but not to the extent it is presented, this next section seeks to assess terrorism as a necessary threat. The argument presented is that the West requires the existence of an "other" in order to form a stable identity, that in turn, allows it to practice sovereignty, security and war.

To talk about identity is to shift the debate surrounding the GWOt into the context of an international epistemological and ontological crisis, and, as David Campbell argues, the 'crisis of international politics is now very much a crisis of representation' (Campbell, 1992, p. 169). This paper utilises the post-structuralist argument that, no stable identity exists to show why the macro-securitization of the GWOt, stems from the lack of foundation to knowledge and the need to secure an "other".

This paper agrees with the post-structural critique of positivism that no foundations for knowledge exist, and thus, the international paradigm of McWorld and Jihad is not an objective reality (Barber, 1992). This may be a nihilistic statement, which would receive critique from the like of Keohane, who argues that 'a debate at the purely theoretical level ... will take us away from our subject matter' (Keohane in Walker, 1993, pp. 99-100). However, the ambiguity of identity has too often been dismissed in order to 'investigate "serious" questions of international relations' (Weber, 1995, p. 2). When these 'serious' questions lead to the U.S. spending \$1.28 trillion on counter-terrorism (Stein, 2011), surely they should be questioned? Walker argues that 'despite all appearances, sovereignty is not a permanent principle of political order; the appearance of permanence is simply an effect of complex practices' (Walker, 1993, p. 163), and the GWOt is one of these complex practices. Ashley further argues that:

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

'the desperate longing for sovereign foundations for the interpretation of practices of politics is today anything but an exclusive preoccupation of modern theories. It is a preoccupation in evidence throughout the entirety of modern culture' (Ashley, 1988, p. 255).

Therefore, what may be clear now is: the threat of terrorism may come from the FATA of Pakistan, but it similarly emerges from the need to put on a performance, as to not expose the lack of foundations knowledge has. Simply put, to remain employed, the actors in the GWoT seek to make the audience believe that their performance is in fact reality.

This denial of a secure ontology raises problems for international relations as,

'how can international relations speak of such foundational concepts such as the state, security, war, danger, sovereignty and so on? [and] After all, isn't security determined by the requirements of a pre-existing sovereignty state and war conducted in its name as a response to objective danger?' (Campbell, 1992, p. 111).

Recognising the arbitrary nature of many Western concepts could undermine the project of modernity, the conception of the international system being occupied by sovereign states would be destroyed. The Western state, therefore, needs to constantly practice representation as, to cease 'would be to expose its lack of prediscursive foundations [and] stasis would be death' (Campbell, 1992, p. 12). The GWoT thus comes from the fear of death; not of individuals from an actual terrorist attack, but the death of the state.

To escape death, the modern state utilises the heroic practice, rather than having to recognise it has no stable identity. It therefore creates an "other" to situate itself against. Ashley's conception of the heroic practice involves placing competing terms in hierarchical opposition where:

'[one] term is privileged as a higher reality, a regulative ideal, and the [other] term is understood only in a derivative and negative way, as a failure to live up to this ideal and as something that endangers this ideal' (Ashley, 1988, p. 230).

It is further argued that without boundaries,

"we" cannot say for sure who "we" are because "we" cannot decide what must be the exclusionary boundaries of the remembered inheritance to which "we" ... must pay respects' (Ashley & Walker, 1990, p. 387).

Boundaries are created between the inside/outside. Therefore, 'the disciplinary practice of creating boundaries and dichotomous relationships is practiced in order to reaffirm the reality of the inside and 'constitutive of our modern understanding of political space' (Walker, 1993, p. 174). In the context of the GWoT, this is most apparent in Bush's declaration of 'you are with us or you are against us' almost immediately after 9/11. The heroic practice in terms of the GWoT has simultaneously portrayed the state and liberal ideals in a hierarchy, with the non-state associations and the religious motives of fourth wave terrorism. However this practice has allowed the 'higher reality' to continue unquestioned.

As a consequence of the heroic practice, identity is created in relation to difference (Campbell, 1992, p. 9). Due to the hierarchy imposed, 'difference' often means 'danger'. International relations, therefore, 'involves little more than an endless parlaying of representation of danger' (Ashley, 1989, p. 311), and as Campbell argues, 'state identity is secured through discourses of danger' (Campbell, 1992, p. 51). The concept of the non-state terrorist is, therefore, used as the opposite to the state. This need to represent the "other" helps explain why the macro-securitizations explored later, work best when they are structured in binary opposites. When terrorism became the biggest threat in international relations within 10 years of the end of the Cold War, it filled a void that, if left unfilled, could have seen the demise of the project of modernity. After the Cold War, there was no shortage of potential candidates for new discourses of danger, such as drugs, the environment or humanitarian crises (Campbell, 1992, p. 170). Simply put, the GWoT was not only in the right place at the right time, but also fulfilled the criteria of being able to create an "other". This may explain why the environment has not been as successfully securitized, despite presenting a more

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

obvious and irreversible danger (Brown & Oliver, 2004). This equally explains why China may present itself as the security concern that displaces terrorism (Buzan, 2006).

The question therefore is, how does terrorism conduct its performance against the “other” to silence questions of identity? After all, it is argued that ‘a modern discourse must ... silence history and difference, moving them to the margins of its discourse, lest they undo the effect of presence in which modern discourse would establish its hegemonic centre (Ashley, 1989, p. 263). One means to performance is foreign policy, and Campbell argues that:

‘foreign policy (conventionally understood as the external orientation of pre-established states with a stable identities) is thus to be re-theorized as one of the boundary producing practices central to the production and reproduction of identity in whose name it operates’ (Campbell, 1992, p. 68).

Cynthia Weber refers to this as the writing and stimulation of the state. To talk about the state as an ontological being is to simulate binary opposites of ‘domestic/international, inside/outside, citizen/foreigner’ (Weber, 1995, p. 129), or, in the GWoT: with ‘us/ them’. The Western state’s foreign policy must then constantly be performed, and this leads on to the next section. This seeks to look at the construction of terrorism; the means through which Campbell’s re-theorized conception of foreign policy operates.

So far, it can be claimed that in the West, terrorism is largely a constructed threat. To look at this construction, the Copenhagen School’s [CS] analytical framework of securitization is recognised as the best tool (McDonald, 2008, p. 563). By using this analytical framework, it will be shown how terrorism has become a macro-securitization, in the sense it has become a universalised threat within international relations. Looking at the macro-securitization of terrorism will enable both an assessment of how big the threat of terrorism is, and equally where it comes from. However, this necessitates moving beyond the assumption that security can be an objective threat, and embracing the idea that security is ultimately a self-referential practice. To address the process of securitization is to ultimately assess ‘an extreme form of politicization’ (Booth, 1994, p. 111), and the CS argues that ‘it is only when an issue is presented as a threat does it become an insecurity, regardless of whether a real existential threat exists’ (Buzan, et al., 1998). As a consequence, to utilise the word ‘security’ is to be responsible for the construction, rather than presentation of reality (Moller, 2007, p. 181). The CS looks at the process of using speech acts in order to designate something as a security concern. Simply put, ‘to speak about security is thought to provide legitimacy for the political actions of the securitizing actor’ (Vuori, 2010, p. 257). The process of securitization is an open procedure, as any ‘securitizing actor’ can try and secure a particular referent object. However, as Williams argues:

‘in practice it is structured by the differential capacity of actors to make socially effective claims about threats, by the forms in which these claims can be made in order to be recognized and accepted as convincing by the relevant audience, and by the empirical factors or situations to which these actors can make reference’ (Williams, 2003, p. 514).

Ole Weaver, a key figure in the CS, argues that those in power often attempt to use an issue’s instrument of securitization to gain control over it, and this ultimately emphasises the point that ‘something is a security threat when elites declare it is’ (Wæver, 1995, p. 54). This may explain why 9/11 was so rapidly securitized by the US. As the chaos of the event was indicative of a complete loss of control, it thus was necessary to become the controlling actor of the event, through the tool of securitization.

Terrorism, however, has been more than merely securitized. It has been introduced to the system level of international relations, rather than the state of individual level. As a consequence, has become a macro-securitization. Macro-securitizations are:

‘based on universalistic constructions of threats and/or referent objects and represent a shared fate where the referent object is staged in universalist terms (environment) or about the widespread sharing of the same threat even though the specific referent objects are mainly at state and societal level (terrorism)’ (Buzan, 2006, p. 1101).

Ultimately, macro-securitizations are ‘defined by the same rules that apply to other securitisations: identification of an

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

existential threat to a valued referent object and the call for exceptional measures (Buzan & Wæver, 2009, p. 257). To securitize an issue is, therefore, to demand the 'mobilisation of maximum effort' (Wæver, 1995, p. 53), and justifies the 'use of extraordinary measures to handle them' (Buzan, et al., 1998, p. 21). Since 2001, terrorism has successfully become the 'dominant macro-securitization around which US, Western and even Russian, Chinese and Indian foreign policy [can] be co-ordinated' (Buzan & Wæver, 2009, p. 272). At the system level of international relations, it has situated the 'principles of freedom, democracy the market and openness as the referent object' which are to be protected from terrorism (Buzan, 2006, p. 1107).

The referent object of a macro-securitization becomes the central concern for international security. As a result, it becomes deeply embedded in political discourse (Vuori, 2010, p. 258). However, macro-securitization relies on a 'certain vagueness ... especially when the threat is not manifest and material' (Buzan & Wæver, 2009, p. 268). As a result, difficulties arise when trying to measure how big the threat from terrorism is. Whilst the word terrorism can 'automatically bring the logic of danger, vulnerability and fear' (Vuori, 2010, p. 259), what is actually being referred to is often undefined. Yet, as the logic of terrorism has been embedded into discourse, this means a lot of the discourse is simply vague. Hence the reason why this paper seeks to challenge the notion that terrorism is a significant objective threat. Consequently, rather than measuring how big the threat of terrorism is through the use of casualties, it is better to look at terrorism as the sum of many elements of society: from discourses, visuals and physical performances.

The vagueness of macro-securitization allows the threat of terrorism to be malleable, adaptable, and thus, broadly applicable on an international level. Macro-securitisations, such as the Cold War and terrorism, allow international relations to impose order and hierarchy to lower security concerns; or bundle other security threats into the overarching macro-security concern (Buzan & Wæver, 2009, p. 257). It is argued that 'there are some striking similarities between the perspectives with which the West once regarded its Cold War opponent and those in which it depicts today's worldwide terrorism' (Schinkel, 2009, p. 177). It is further argued that contemporary terrorism, similar to the Cold War due to its vagueness and applicability, has been successful in tying together 'several longstanding security concerns' such as crime, immigration, drugs and WMD (Buzan, 2006, p. 1004). Demonstrating the structuring ability of macro-securitizations, but also in reference to the previous section, show why they are necessary to organise an international system that lacks a stable identity.

The vagueness of a macro-securitization also means that this void must be filled with the utilisation of both verbal, visual and physical discourses if it is to remain durable. It is by using these, along with the physical threat identified earlier, that it is possible to assign some form of measurement to the vagueness of terrorism.

Terrorism was quickly transformed into a macro-security concern through discourse, days, if not hours, after the first plane hit the towers. This push was led by the American Government with Bush's declaration 'our war on terror begins' (Bush, 2001). It is claimed that the ultimatum of 'you are with us or against us', created 'an atmosphere much like the Cold War where everybody found themselves in a way, "choosing sides"' (Stone, 2009, p. 9). Arguably, some of the best evidence to support this claim is that on 12 September 2001, NATO took the unprecedented action of invoking Article 5 of the treaty, and 'aided in the legitimizing of the Global War on Terror' (Buzan, 2006, p. 1103). David Campbell also makes the argument that, in order to find meaning in the events of 9/11 'there [was] a veritable deluge of narratives organized around notions of attack, atrocity, crime, and most powerfully, war'. Furthermore, he indirectly makes reference to the concept of speech acts, when he claims these narratives were spoken by political leaders, media pundits and academic commentators (Campbell, 2002).

Whilst terrorism is spoken about, it is also explicitly performed through both the physical attacks, and the response it generates. It is claimed that:

'counterterrorism measures (in statements, enactments, activities, expressions made by cabinet members) set the tone for the political and public debate. Government statements and memoranda are not mere texts: they create reality' (de Graaf & de Graaff, 2010, p. 267).

It is just over two years ago that the performance of counter-terrorism was most obvious, with the pictures of Obama

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

and Clinton sitting and physically watching the capture/death of Osama bin Laden, as if it were a TV show. Alongside this, America's Ten Most Wanted,

'is a means to perform counter terrorism, as it is argued the list is used to 'increases the visibility of [counterterrorism], [it] demonstrates the government's decisiveness, but also increases the performance of counterterrorism policy' (de Graaf & de Graaff, 2010, p. 270).

Moreover, some have argued that airport security is a form of performativity in the sense it acts as a means to secure the individual body as one of 'us' (Adey, 2009).

Importantly however, the performativity of the GWOt is also indicative of how big the threat from terrorism is. For example, the top ten 'most wanted' list is demonstrating less of a commitment to the GWOt. Since the death of Osama bin Laden, there has been a spot on the FBI's list; this spot was not filled by another terrorist, rather it was filled by a paedophile. If this is a measure, it could be claimed the threat from terrorism decreased by 10%. However, this alone is not an indication that the GWOt may have stopped becoming a priority in the US, although securitizing actors have not sort to mobilise a constant performativity by introducing a new 'terrorist' onto the list. Rather, it is indicative that priorities may be changing, and as will be argued later there is a potential for the GWOt to be replaced as the dominant macro-security framework.

Moreover, 'since we are permanently exposed to images' (Moller, 2007, p. 181), it is also important to assess the securitization of terrorism beyond simply what is spoken and performed. Williams argues that:

'the speech act of securitization is not reducible to a purely verbal act or a linguistic rhetoric: it is a broader performative act which draws upon a variety of contextual institutional and symbolic resources for its effectiveness' (Williams, 2003, p. 526).

Similar to the way the atomic scientists used to doomsday clock to represent the Cold War (Vuori, 2010), the images from 9/11 still serve to fuel the GWOt. It was argued soon after September 11th that Bush had turned the images of 9/11 into an 'ahistorical, perhaps even anti-historical collective memory' (Novick cited in Moller, 2007, p. 186). The GWOt relies on 'the twin towers material absence, and the meaning of assigned to their destruction, visually represented and incorporated into collective memory, are still very present in US foreign and security policy' (Moller, 2007, p. 192). Furthermore, Shapiro argues that:

'verbal and visual reference to 9/11 is a beeline to the use of extraordinary means, intensifying the process of securitization [due to the] ... continuous repetition of the attack in video footage on television screens.' (Shapiro cited in Moller, 2007, p. 184).

With the 9/11 memorial soon being opened under ground zero, it is clear to see that America is cementing the feelings from 9/11 into a visual reality, but if these images are ahistorical, could they be a tool to perpetually justify and maintain the GWOt? Compared to the US Holocaust memorial, which attempts to help individuals understand how 'attempts to annihilate an entire people came to be and how this was executed' (Lennon & Foley, 1999, p. 49), 9/11 was a single attack killing relatively few individuals. As a result the 9/11 memorial cannot offer an education or awareness of events, unlike the Holocaust memorial that serves as a reminder of the dark side of human nature (Lennon & Foley, 1999, p. 49). Rather, it arguably just reinstates the assumptions of the Western governments that "they" want to hurt "us", rather than foster an understanding into the reasons why, or how.

The importance of visuals is again represented in the example of the Boston bombings. Despite Obama not speaking of terrorism, images shown around the world in the aftermath have undermined his stance. After the second suspect was caught the international media has projected scenes of crowds cheering around the world. Edelman makes the argument that 'political spectacles can be of massive or majestic scale which emphasizes the difference between the mundanity of everyday life and the importance of the political ritual' (Edelman cited in Vuori, 2010, p. 262). Thus, turning the capture of a suspected terrorist into a sports crowd, keeps terrorism above everyday life and allows it to retain its importance. It is only while terrorism retains its difference from the mundane that it will be a threat, and thus

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

terrorism could be defined as when 'an action is labelled 'terrorist' [and] when its psychological effects are out of proportion to its purely physical result' (Aron cited in Crotty, 2005, p. 257). As well as this, the fact that Obama, as president of the US, cannot compete with the media in the presentation of the Boston bombings as a terrorist attack, it is indicative of the structuring influence terrorism has in international relations.

One final means in which to assess the size of the threat from terrorism, is by looking at the durability of the GWoT. Macro-securitizations do not refer to an objective threat and as a result, have to be consciously generated by securitization actors (Buzan & Wæver, 2009, p. 268). Therefore, the GWoT, as shown above, is having to be constantly embedded in discourse to keep it alive. It has been argued that while the GWoT could remain durable, it is also possible that 'if things go on as they have done since 9/11, then terrorism will probably not be seen as a sufficiently large threat to sustain the costly and controversial apparatus of the GWoT' (Buzan, 2008, p. 559). Simply put, the threat from terrorism needs to constantly be presented; otherwise it is not a threat. Thus, this reaffirms the point that the size of the threat is reliant on more than simply looking at physical attacks. Terrorism, as previously argued, is therefore, a temporalized and dialectical phenomenon (Schinkel, 2009, p. 188). Barry Buzan compares the Cold War and the GWoT, and asks the question into whether the GWoT is the new Cold War. Buzan concludes, however, that the likelihood of the GWoT remaining as the macro-security concern is limited, stating that:

'there are quite a variety of possibilities for competing securitizations, such as rising sea levels or approaching asteroids or the spread of a new killer plague could easily put planetary environmental concerns at the top of the securitization agenda' (Buzan, 2006, p. 1114).

However, while the GWoT may be replaced, it is important to note that macro-securitizations work best when they are matched in pairs, 'exemplified by the two camps of the Cold War that claimed to represent the whole of the civilised world' (Vuori, 2010, p. 258), and, to some extent, confirmed in the context of the GWoT with the emergence of the Jihadist and McWorld forces (Barber, 1992). Thus, while Buzan argues that the GWoT may be overcome by other macro-securitizations, such as drugs or the environment, the threat from China would allow the most stable of macro-securitizations. China would allow the emergence of two sides once more, whereas the environment would present an inactive enemy. This focus on China is becoming apparent today with America explicitly talking about the pivot from the Middle East to Asia (Richburg, 2011). As it is not possible to have two macro-securitizations at once it is argued that 'China as a threat to the US position as sole superpower is perhaps the development most likely to erode US commitment to the GWoT' (Buzan & Wæver, 2009, p. 260). Thus, in a few years this research question may read *How big is the threat from contemporary China and where is does it come from?*

What this point also seeks to illustrate, in reference to the need for pairs, is that security relies on a balance between "us" and "them". As a result the threat can only be as big as "us" if not the threat would be unbalanced. For example, if "us" is bigger than "them", then there would not be a threat, yet, equally the threat would be overwhelming if "them" were bigger than "us". The size of the threat from terrorism is, therefore, simply a reflection on how big the West perceives itself. However, this reference to China also seeks to show that the size of the threat from terrorism is ultimately relative as a consequence of it being a macro-security concern. To fully understand the size of the threat of terrorism is to be able to recognise that as a threat, it is extremely politicised and relative to other concerns. We may not be able to accurately measure the size of the terrorist threat, but we can claim it is the most important one. Terrorism, or the size of any macro-securitization, can only be measured in reference to other potential threats.

As a conclusion, what can be claimed about the size and the origin of the threat from contemporary terrorism? This paper has not sought to claim that the threat from terrorism is not a physical one, rather, it has tried to demonstrate that while the West has sought to securitize the issue of terrorism, predominantly non-westerners are the victims of attacks. However, the fact the West has successfully made terrorism a macro-security concern is indicative that; firstly there is an element of necessity, and secondly, the threat from terrorism is constructed from more than simply reference to terrorist attacks. It was explored that the threat from terrorism largely comes from the lack of stable foundations for concepts, such as the state, security and sovereignty. Thus, using macro-securitization to order the international structure, the West can defer questions of identity to more "serious" questions; this question being how to combat the threat of terrorism. The essay then sought to address the temporal quality of terrorism by looking back at the macro-securitization of the Cold War, looking to the future of the potential macro-securitization of China, and

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

ultimately making the argument that terrorism is simply a relative threat. As a result, no unit of measurement can be applied to measure the objective threat from terrorism, rather, it has to be recognised to measure the threat from terrorism is to assess how it is securitized relative to other security concerns.

Finally, the threat from terrorism comes from the fact that we need to fear the monsters in the dark, and watch the performance by the actors involved in the GWOt, in order to distract ourselves from the realisation that we do not know who we are. However, no threat is durable, instead it is relative and thus there will always be something that 'represents the biggest threat to the UK'. Ultimately, we have a compulsion for security that we satisfy in reference to an "other". By identifying the "other" we are relieved 'of the dilemmas and challenges [we] face to discover ... what it is to act and live as humans' (Dillon, 1996, p. 14). That is where the threat from terrorism comes from.

Bibliography

Adey, P., 2009. Facing Airport Security: Affect, Biopolitics, and the Preemptive Securitisation of the Mobile Body. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Volume 27, pp. 274-295.

Ashley, R., 1988. Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 17(2), pp. 227-62.

Ashley, R., 1989. Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism, and War. In: *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. New York: Lexington Books, pp. 259-322.

Ashley, R. & Walker, R., 1990. Conclusion: Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies. *International Studies Quarterly*, 34(3), pp. 367-416.

Barber, B., 1992. *Jihad vs. McWorld*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1992/03/jihad-vs-mcworld/303882/> [Accessed 25 02 2013].

Beydoun, K., 2013. *Boston Explosions: 'Please Don't Be Arabs or Muslims'*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/04/201341681629153634.html> [Accessed 22 04 2013].

Booth, K., 1994. Security and Self: Reflections of a Fallen Realist. *YCISS Occasional Paper Number*, Volume Number 26.

Brown, P. & Oliver, M., 2004. *Top Scientist Attacks US over Global Warming*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2004/jan/09/sciencenews.greenpolitics> [Accessed 5 5 2013].

Bush, G., 2001. *Text of George Bush's Speech*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/sep/21/september11.usa13> [Accessed 5 5 2013].

Buzan, B., 2006. Will the 'Global War on Terrorism' Be the New Cold War?. *International Affairs*, 82(1101-1118), p. 82.

Buzan, B., 2008. A Leader Without Followers? The United States in World Politics after Bush. *International Politics*, Volume 45, pp. 554-570.

Buzan, B. & Wæver, O., 2009. Macrosecuritisation and Security Constellations: Reconsidering Scale in Securitisation Theory. *Review of International Studies*, Volume 35, pp. 253-276.

Buzan, B., Wæver, O. & de Wilde, J., 1998. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner.

Campbell, D., 1992. *Writing Security: Untied States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Manchester:

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

Manchester University Press.

Campbell, D., 2002. Time Is Broken: The Return of the Past In the Response to September 11. *Theory and Event*, 5(4), p. <http://www.tnr.com/101501/cottle101501.html>

Crotty, W., 2005. *Democratic Development and Political Terrorism: The Global Perspective*. Florida: Northeastern University Press.

de Graaf, B. & de Graaff, B., 2010. Bringing Politics Back In: The Introduction of the 'Performative Power' of Counterterrorism. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 3(2), pp. 261-275.

Dillon, M., 1996. *Politics of Security*. London: Routledge.

Horwitz, S., 2013. *Investigators Sharpen Focus on Boston Bombing Suspect's Widow*. [Online] Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/investigators-sharpen-focus-on-boston-bombing-suspects-widow/2013/05/03/a2cd9d28-b413-11e2-baf7-5bc2a9dc6f44_story.html [Accessed 5 5 2013].

Jenkins, B. M., 1975. International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict. In: D. Carlton & C. Schaerfer, eds. *International terrorism and world security*. London: Croom Helm , pp. 13-49.

Jones, A., 2013. *Statistics Show You Are NOT Going to Be Killed by Terrorism*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.infowars.com/statistics-show-you-are-not-going-to-be-killed-by-terrorism/> [Accessed 29 04 2013].

Lennon, J. & Foley, M., 1999. Interpretation of the Unimaginable: The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., and "Dark Tourism". *Journal of Travel Research*, Volume 35, pp. 46-50.

McDonald, 2008. Securitization and the Construction of Security. *European Journal of International Relations*, 14(4), pp. 563-587.

MI5, 2013. *International Terrorism*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/the-threats/terrorism/international-terrorism.html> [Accessed 22 04 2013].

Moller, F., 2007. Photographic Interventions in Post-9/11 Security Policy. *Security Dialogue*, Volume 38, pp. 179-196.

Musharbash, Y., 2009. *Surprising Study On Terrorism: Al-Qaida Kills Eight Times More Muslims Than Non-Muslims*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/surprising-study-on-terrorism-al-qaida-kills-eight-times-more-muslims-than-non-muslims-a-660619.html> [Accessed 29 04 2013].

NCTC, 2013. *CounterTerrorism 2012 Calendar*. [Online] Available at: http://www.nctc.gov/site/pdfs/ct_calendar_2013.pdf [Accessed 22 04 2013].

Richburg, K., 2011. *U.S. pivot to Asia makes China nervous*. [Online] Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/us-pivot-to-asia-makes-china-nervous/2011/11/15/gIQAsQpVRN_story.html [Accessed 6 5 2013].

Rogers, S., 2011. *Mortality Statistics: Every Cause of Death in England and Wales*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/oct/28/mortality-statistics-causes-death-england-wales-2010#data> [Accessed 26 04 2013].

Schinkel, W., 2009. On the Concept of Terrorism. *Contemporary Political Theory*, Volume 8, pp. 176-198.

South Asia Terrorism Portal , 2013. *Fatalities in Pakistan Region Wise: 2013*. [Online] Available at:

Terrorism: Realities, Constructs, and Theatre

Written by James Cole

http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/fatilities_regionwise2013.htm [Accessed 22 04 2013].

START, 2012. *Integrated United States Security Database (IUSSD): Data on the Terrorist Attacks in the United States Homeland, 1970 to 2011*. Maryland: START .

Stein, S., 2011. *From 9/11 To Osama Bin Laden's Death, Congress Spent \$1.28 Trillion In War On Terror*. [Online] Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/05/02/osama-bin-laden-dead-war-on-terror-costs_n_856390.html [Accessed 6 5 2013].

Stone, M., 2009. *Security According to Buzan: A Comprehensive Security Analysis*, Sciences Po – Paris, France: Security Discussion Papers Series 1.

U.S. Department of State , 2011. *National Counterterrorism Center: Annex of Statistical Information*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2011/195555.htm> [Accessed 22 04 2013].

UK Home Office, 2011. *CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, Norwich: TSO.

Vuori, J., 2010. A Timely Prophet? The Doomsday Clock as a Visualization of Securitization Moves with a Global Referent Object. *Security Dialogue*, Volume 41, pp. 255-77.

Wæver, O., 1995. Securitization. In: C. W. Hughes & L. Y. Meng, eds. *Security Studies: A Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 93-98.

Walker, R., 1993. *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weber, C., 1995. *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, M., 2003. Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics. *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 47, pp. 511-531.

—

*Written by: James Cole
Written at: University of Nottingham
Written for: Dr Andrew Mumford
Date written: May 2013*